W H S WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS W H S

Records of Meetings of the Washtenaw Historical Society

Vol. VI, No. 2 Ann Arbor, Michigan May, 1948

LIBRARIES IN WASHTENAW COUNTY

By Frances A. Hannum
Librarian, Ann Arbor Public Library

Dexter Public Library

The Dexter Public Library was founded in 1926 and supported by the Women's Study Club until the village took it over about 1943. Mrs. Mary Wyman, President of the Club, was the first librarian. Then for a few years various members of the Club acted as librarians for a month at a time. Mrs. R. G. Sorter was the first paid librarian, followed by Mrs. Flora Smith. At the present time (1948), Mrs. A. A. Schoen is librarian.

The library is open Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday from 7 to 9 P.M., also Tuesday and Saturday from 3 to 5. The income for the last fiscal year came from the following sources:

State Aid. . .	$189.14	
Gifts.	122.26	
Penal fines. .	47.23	
Village tax. .	378.30. . .	$726.93

With a book stock of 2,377 volumes and 248 registered borrowers, the circulation for the last fiscal year was 2,744.

The splendid library building was given by Royal Samuel Copeland, who was born in Dexter, in later life moved to New York and became United States Senator from that state during the years 1923-1929.

Manchester Township Library by J. Palmer Librarian

The earliest record of Manchester Township Library was in the Township Clerk's record which has disappeared, and only people's recollection is left. The township was organized separately in 1836, the schools began to organize in May, 1837, and the Library was probably organized about 1840. The book that records the proceedings of the Township Board of school inspectors states that in 1852 the Township Board and the Board of School Inspectors met and worked out a plan to discard 172 books from their library, selling them to the highest bidder, the proceeds to be placed with the library funds.

The library was in the town clerk's office and he served as librarian, opening the library Saturday afternoons. The books had a large closed case, mounted on a long table. A black walnut table served as a desk and has so served until March of this year (1948). The librarian's salary was $25 a year.

Not much change took place till the practice of hiring a librarian was inaugurated. Then the era of Women's clubs had arrived and the ladies laid hands on the Library. They rented a room, built

shelves, contributed furniture, books and interest. Women still supply the enthusiasm. The library is now housed in its own building. It has about 4500 books and serves three out-townships with a circulation of about 10,000 a year, 24 hours service a week. It is a free library, stressing interests of children. They collect local history and mean to take an interest in what interests our citizens. They have a summer program for children and the sponsors of Manchester Township Library feel it has made a place for itself in the community life.

Milan Free Library — The Milan Free Library was opened in 1935. The library committee was assisted in the organization by donated time of some members of the Ann Arbor Business and Professional Women's Club, which organization was interested in libraries for Washtenaw County. This library was located above the fire station. Two hundred dollars was received from the village tax-roll, and $25 from the Woman's Club. About 2000 books were donated by various organizations, clubs, and individuals. Dr. John DeTar of Milan was responsible for starting the library, became the first chairman of the association, and served one year as President of the Library Board. Mrs. Fannie Greashaber was the first librarian. During WPA days, the library received extra assistance. Mrs. William Stebbins was the librarian, followed by Mrs. Roy Frisbie. At present, Miss Marion McNeill through cooperation with the Monroe County Library, and Mrs. Harvey Gotts are taking charge of the library in the Council Chambers on Main Street. Milan seems to be the only WPA-aided library in Washtenaw County that survived after WPA funds were withdrawn.

Milan is partly in Washtenaw County and Partly in Monroe County. Monroe has a county library system and so Milan got $100 last year from the county fund. It also got a grant from State Aid amounting to $1282.33. The library serves York Township and got $250 from that source. Milan village gave $750 last year, but on March 8, 1948, at the village election, the taxpayers voted a one-mill tax. State Aid showed the people what could be done and then they responded by voting the mill tax. During the last fiscal year, with a book stock of 4,946 volumes and a registration of 1,386 borrowers, the total circulation of books was 18,240, or 7 books per capita population, or 13 books per registered borrower.

Salem — In 1937, under WPA, a small library was organized in Salem, with Mrs. Opal Luke as librarian. Apparently the library was disbanded when WPA funds were no longer available.

The present library is sponsored by Salem Union PTA as a summer project with about 125 books from the State Library. Mrs. Mamie E. Trapp is the present librarian of this collection and she distributes the books from her home. She receives no pay for her services and has no funds to provide for the upkeep of, or addition to, the collection. A very small sum is charged for overdue books. This revenue is used for shipping the books back to Lansing. This project has been carried on for three summers, the hours for service being Tuesday and Thursday from 10 A.M. to noon. Both the Salem School and the Federated Church have small book collections, but apparently not available to the public.

Ypsilanti Ladies' Library "To Mrs. John A. Watling belongs the credit and honor of originating the idea of a Ladies' Library Association for Ypsilanti, for she, with the cooperation of a group of women, who afterwards became the officers and directors, perfected the organization of the Association and founded the Ypsilanti Ladies' Library. A meeting was called to be held in the Young Ladies' room of the Union School on February 20, 1868, for organization purposes."

Mrs. Benjamin Follett was elected President and Miss Sarah Pardee, Librarian. A constitution was adopted and committees appointed. The history of the library was the usual one: subscriptions, entertainments, strawberry festivals, and donations. One hundred books and $165 were received. A room was secured in the Arcade block on Huron Street at a rental of $100 a year. "The library was opened for the weekly distribution of books on May 23, 1868, with 175 volumes." A yearly subscription fee of $1.00 was charged. This amount was later raised to $2.00. In November, 1869, the Association was incorporated under the laws of the State of Michigan and retained its name, "The Ladies' Library Association of Ypsilanti." Early in 1872 the library became crowded and was moved to larger quarters in the same building. Again these quarters became too small, and in 1886 the library was moved to rooms on the second floor of the Union block on Congress Street. Miss Marie A. Newberry had been librarian about this time. In May, 1887, Mrs. Lucy B. Loomis was elected librarian and served faithfully for almost 40 years, until 1926.

A letter dated April 1, 1890, was received by the Association, which read as follows:

> Will you please accept this deed of my house and lot with my best wishes for your future prosperity.
>
> The lot north of the building, as far as the first terrace you can use until I want it for other purposes. Of course you will keep the walks clean and the grass cut.
>
> I enclose the insurance policy. The insurance runs for two years, which is a present from me. You can have possession when the Waltons leave the house.
>
> (Signed) MARY ANN STARKWEATHER

"In May, 1890, Mrs. Starkweather proposed to contribute the beautiful stained glass window which adorns the west front of the building...After some changes were made, and with some new furniture, the building was opened with a reception on Dec. 10, 1890."

"This building was a handsome old residence, well located and well adapted for a library. The deed of gift included a qualification to the effect that, if the building should pass into other hands, it would revert to the estate. In consequence the library is still under the Board of Directors of the Ladies' Library Association, although the city has voted money for several years toward its maintenance, and it is open daily and is a free public library." (1926)

In October, 1899, the library was opened free to the citizens by an act of the Common Council, with an appropriation of $250 a year.

By March, 1900, the Association was entirely out of debt. In 1904, the Council voted $1600 yearly for the library, to be open six days a week. At first the library occupied rooms on the lower floor only, but later was moved to larger rooms on the second floor and the downstairs room used as a reading room. In 1915, the Association raised enough money to buy the north lot referred to in the letter quoted above.

County Library — Though there are 25 county libraries in the State of Michigan, Washtenaw County can not yet boast of a real county system. The office of the County Superintendent of Schools does maintain school library service for the rural schools by borrowing books from the Michigan State Library. This service is greatly appreciated by the rural school children as is shown by the number of books read.

A nucleus of a county library was started during the depression years with WPA money. The Ann Arbor Business and Professional Women's Club was responsible for getting this collection of books started, their Library Committee having given a great deal of free time to the organization. New books were also purchased by the Club. Mrs. Wright was librarian about 1936, and Miss Carol Hawks during 1937-1938. The books comprising these collections - and more added since - are housed on the top floor of the Court House but not available to county people because the quarters were condemned some years ago.

Several appeals for county library service have been made to the County Board of Supervisors since 1929, but as yet no money has been forthcoming to establish a county library. The Board promised to make a county library one of its first post-war projects. A county library law permits the establishment of a county library with a large grant from State Aid for Libraries for the first year and a per capita grant for each year thereafter.

Ann Arbour Library — The Western Emigrant for October 6, 1830, contained the following story: "Ann Arbour (sic) Library. This institution was commenced in the summer of 1827. The inhabitants of the place were few, and the establishment was commenced on a small scale. Some additions have been made since, and the Library now contains about 100 volumes of miscellaneous works. By a small exertion of the inhabitants of our village and its vicinity, the funds of the establishment might be doubled. It is particularly important that such an exertion should be made. It is the cheapest way that can be adopted, in our present circumstances, of rendering the most valuable works accessible to all. Twenty or thirty individuals, by contributing three dollars each (the amount of a share in the Library), might be able to procure a number of the most valuable publications in addition to the present stock of the Library. Every member of the company should exert himself to obtain at least one new subscriber. By this means an addition can be made of a number of books that are much wanted in this place, and which such a village as Ann Arbour should by no means be destitute of. Our library is deficient in some of the most valuable works. Several works on Natural and Moral Science, History, Politics, and Political Economy, the North American Review, and the American Journal of Arts and Sciences, would form an important accession,

and it might easily be made. It is a reproach for any village to be destitute of a Library furnished with such works. Similar establishments should be formed in every town that contains a hundred inhabitants. They would answer a valuable purpose at the present time, and might be afterwards so modified as to bring them as near as possible to the character of Lyceums. No means should be left unimproved in any part of our Territory to render science accessible to all. And our citizens have means in their power, abundantly more perhaps than they are aware of. The expense of forming a Library in every settlement would be a mere trifle to each individual, less than almost everyone spends in the year for purposes quite useless at least. The season is approaching that affords to every person a considerable portion of time for intellectual and moral improvement-- for acquiring an acquaintance with that beautiful system of Nature in which we are placed, and gaining access to that pure and elevated enjoyment which Science and learning are capable of affording. Every young person surely can have a number of hours, each day, unoccupied by any business. It is an important consideration how this time is to be disposed of, for it is of immense value. Surely every young person who, in this age, and this country, neglects the improvement of his intellectual and moral nature, is wanting to himself and his fellow men; he promises little to his country. We would by no means be understood that this should be attended with the neglect of other business. Independently of his business, every individual, we say, has a considerable portion of time for reading. Important knowledge may be acquired by every man without any prejudice to his business, but on the contrary with very great advantage."

"The Members of the Ann Arbour Library Company are informed that the annual tax for the year, commencing August 8th, 1831, is now due. The regulations require payment to be made within thirty days from the 8th inst. George Corselius, Librarian. August 15th, 1931."
- Emigrant, August 24, 1831

"I have just opened a Circulating Library comprising the following books. Encyclopedia Americana, 10 vols. Harper's Family Library. Pitcairn's Island. Turner's Sacred History. Bush's Life of Mohammet .....(A long list followed) To the above additions will be made from time to time of the most useful new publications. Terms: for one year, $2.50; six months, 1.50; three months, 0.87. Payment always in advance. Geo. Corselius." - Emigrant, November 7, 1832

"Agreeably to previous notice a meeting of the stockholders of the Ann Arbour Library was held on the 15th Jan. when it was determined that the Association should be dissolved and the Books &c distributed among the members according to the amount which each paid in respectively. Any person having Books belonging to the Library are required to return them immediately. Ann Arbour, Jan. 1833."
- Michigan Emigrant, February 20, 1833

"Ann Arbor Circulating Library--At the office of the Emigrant. The following works have been added: Lives of Madama De Steal (sic) & Madame Roland, Travelling Bachellor, Lives of Early Navigators, Cox Adventures on the Columbia River, Memoirs of the Countess De Genlis,

Westward Ho!, Auto-biography of Walter Scott, Romance of Spanish History, Littel's Museum of Foreign Literature and Science, Mrs. Trollop's Domestic Manners of the Americans, Irving's Conquest of Grenada. Terms, 2.50 a year, six months 1.30, three months 75 cts. Payment in advance."

- Michigan Emigrant, March 6, 1833

Ladies Library Association Ann Arbor, Michigan

In March, 1866, some thirty representative women of Ann Arbor met in the First Presbyterian Church and organized the Ladies' Library Association. A constitution was presented, accepted and signed. The Ladies subscribed $118. A Board of fifteen was appointed, with Mrs. A. E. Kellogg as President. This subscription library was started in an upstairs room in the Hangsterfer Block on the southwest corner of Washington and Main streets at a rental of $50 a year. Early in April, 1866, the Association was incorporated according to law. The usual round of entertainments and strawberry festivals brought in $453.28 for equipment and books. At the end of the year, there were 79 members, 302 books, and total receipts of $780.79.

"Its first birthday was celebrated by a gathering in the Congregational Church, at which President Haven delivered an exceedingly interesting anniversary address, full of good cheer and encouragement. Judge Cooley also made some happy remarks. Fifteen new subscribers gave their names. The Argus at this time states that no Association in the State has in several years accomplished what has been done in one."

Not yet one year old, in January, 1867, the library outgrew its quarters and was moved to a larger room at 22 South Main Street over the then First National Bank. Mrs. Theodore Cooley became President in 1870, and Mrs. Adams in 1871. From the beginning in 1866 until April, 1873, Mrs. A. H. Hunt acted as Secretary. Mrs. Gilmore was Treasurer from 1867 to 1873. Miss Sarah Barry was the first librarian, resigning in 1875 because of ill health.

About 1870, the Ladies' Library Association petitioned the City Council to take over the subscription library and make it a public library. The Council declined. In 1879, when the Board of Education offered to combine the school district library (then located in the Court House) with the Ladies' Library Association library, the Association declined.

In 1880, the Ladies purchased a 60x132' lot at 324 East Huron Street, and erected a building there in 1885 at a cost of $4,268. Books were still circulated on a subscription basis only. In an alcove in this building, 145 volumes of the library of the Daughters of the American Revolution were housed. A real antique was also kept in this building - "a hand painted tortoise shell, the property of Mrs. Ann Allen." What has become of it? Who knows?

The Ladies' Library Association was the prime mover in securing the present Carnegie Library, built in 1905-1906. Through the efforts of the Ladies, a Carnegie grant of $20,000 was promised for a library

building, with the understanding that some governmental unit should maintain it at not less than $2000 a year. Several sites were proposed but the final decision had to be made between the Ladies' Library Association property at 324 East Huron Street and the corner of Huron and Thayer Streets, a part of the High School site. The debate waxed strong between the Ladies and the Board of Education, also townspeople. In December, 1903, the Board of Education voted 5 to 3 for the present site at Huron and Thayer Streets. The Ladies were dissatisfied and the Ann Arbor Daily News for December 9, 1903, carried the following headline: "The Carnegie Library may be killed. The Ladies' Library Association feels piqued and withdraws the proposition to join with the School Board."

Just what happened or what agreement was reached the writer has not been able to learn. In December, 1904, the High School burned. Plans were made for a new school building, and the library known as the "Public Library" was erected at the same time from Carnegie grants:

Sept. 1, 1905, Gift from Andrew Carnegie. . . $15,000
Aug. 31, 1907, Gift from Andrew Carnegie. . . $15,000

A resolution to combine with the Ladies' Library was passed by the Board of Education, and printed in the Ann Arbor News Argus for November 15, 1907.

In 1908, the Ladies' Library Association transferred its 5,000 books to the Public Library, and in 1916 deeded its property at 324 East Huron Street to the Board of Education, with the following provision: "If, at any time in the future, the parties to this proposed agreement deem it wise, and for the educational advantage of the inhabitants of said city, to erect a library building in some suitable place to be agreed upon by said parties, then the funds realized... from the sale of the property proposed to be deeded may be applied to that end and used for that purpose." The site at 324 East Huron Street was purchased in 1947 by the Michigan Bell Telephone Company, for location of their present new offices.

The Ladies' Library Association is still in existence. At the present time (April, 1948), Mrs. Philip E. Bursley is President and Mrs. John Garrett Winter is Treasurer. During the years that the Ladies' Library was circulating its books, the Association received three memorial gifts:

$1,000 from David Henning in the name of his wife
500 from Governor Felch in the name of his wife
3,000 willed by Mrs. Alonzo B. Palmer

These funds, a total endowment of $4,500, were invested in bonds, the interest from which has been used to buy books for the Public Library. Since 1929, this interest has been used for art books of many kinds. Today the Public Library (thanks to the Ladies' Library Association) owns an enviable collection of art books valued at more than $9,000. The good work of the "Ladies" goes on.

Ann Arbor High School Library

The High School Library was first housed in the office of the Superintendent in the High School building erected in 1865. It consisted of 1100 volumes collected from the district libraries. It is uncertain when a regular librarian was appointed. In 1883, the library was moved to the second floor just above the office of the Superintendent and Miss Nellie S. Loving was appointed librarian, with a collection of about 2000 books.

"It was evident that the care of these volumes was not expected to be an arduous task for she was urged to bring her fancy work that time would not hang heavily upon her hands. However, imbued as she was with the spirit of service, there was no time for this pursuit." Miss Loving served as librarian for 39 years, from 1883 to 1922.

In 1889, when an addition was built to the High School building, "provision was made for a larger library and study room." In 1893-1894 while Miss Loving was on leave of absence to take a library course, Miss Carrie Watts acted as librarian. She says: "The library at that time being also a study room, it was a rather strenuous job to keep order with classes changing each hour, do the catalogueing, repairing books, and looking after the general circulation, with no assistant, and a salary of less than $25 per month."

In December, 1904, when the school building was destroyed by fire, what was left of the library was moved to the Methodist church parlors until the Carnegie building was ready in May of 1907. The High School library was housed in the Carnegie building until September, 1930, when it was moved to room C-17 in the present High School building. This room seats 72 students and contains over 10,000 volumes for the use of high school students only. Miss Bernice Bacon is librarian. She has a part-time assistant and a library page to assist her. The use of books totaled 30,397 for the school year 1946-1947.

Ann Arbor Public Library

Though the library in the old High School building was open for public use during school hours, very few Ann Arbor people availed themselves of the opportunity to borrow books. However, when the Carnegie building was opened in 1907, people naturally turned to it for their reading and reference matter.

Because the school library was open to the public, the date of the founding of the Public Library has always been set as of 1856, with Miss Nellie S. Loving appointed as librarian in 1883. In 1922, Miss Loving retired and Mr. Samuel W. McAllister was appointed librarian. Miss Helen A. Smith, whose service with the library began in 1898, was made first assistant. Miss Emma Bloss and Miss Hazel Keedle were heads of the High School and Junior Departments respectively. Eight persons were on the staff. With the resignation of Mr. McAllister in 1928, Miss Frances A. Hannum was appointed librarian, and has continued to date. The staff in 1948 numbers ten, six of whom are professionally trained librarians, graduates of schools of library science.

The following figures show the growth of the library since the first year in the Carnegie building:

	1907-1908	1946-1947	Increase
Circulation.	32,037	221,702	592 %
Volumes.	10,059	73,534	631 %
Borrowers.	2,082	10,444	401 %

How is it possible to house 73,534 books in a building originally intended to contain about 30,000? It is being done and in considerable confusion to the staff, though the library patrons may not be aware of it. Books are shelved on four different levels and scattered over more than twice the space given to books in 1907, space for cataloging, repairing, and storage having been acquired in the High School building after the annex was built. Close to 2000 books are even stored in an unused room in a school building some twelve blocks away and of course not available when wanted. Some discussion has been raised at various times about a new library building but, lacking the interest and impetus of the citizens, the new library is still a dream. The latest move was made by Mayor Brown who proposed a new library in the Civic Center. At the present time, this proposition has been shelved. Since the present Carnegie building was a gift, it is hoped that the taxpayers will vote the necessary funds for a new library building when plans mature, either under the plan of the Mayor or through the Board of Education, which Board continues to maintain the Public Library under the school budget.

A branch library established down-town in 1911 was discontinued many years ago. With the location of a new building closer to Main Street, with transportation accessible, and with so many automobiles in the city, branch libraries are not a necessity at this time. Circulating libraries for students are provided in each of the elementary school buildings and three Junior High School buildings. The elementary school libraries are under the supervision of the respective principals. The Junior and Senior High School libraries are under the professional and technical administration of the librarian of the Public Library. These libraries are fully equipped, books are completely catalogued, and professionally trained librarians are employed. These school libraries and the Public Library are maintained by the Board of Education and supported by school taxes.

The author of this paper on libraries in Washtenaw County knows that this is by no means a complete history. It does not cover all libraries. The accounts of some village libraries are missing; also most school libraries and institutional libraries such as hospitals and the Federal Penitentiary. There have been collections of books in stores, factories, homes, and churches which have given service to nearby residents. There are rental libraries, too. It would take the full time of a research student for a year to ferret out the complete history of libraries in this county. The following resumé may be a lead for such a student to take up from here:

Resumé

1827	Ann Arbour Library
1837	University of Michigan Library
1838	Manchester Township Library
1848	Ypsilanti High School Library
1852	Michigan State Normal College at Ypsilanti
1856	Ann Arbor School District Library (Public Library)
1859	University of Michigan Law Library
1866	Ladies' Library Association of Ann Arbor
1868	Ladies' Library Association of Ypsilanti
1873	St. Thomas Library, Ann Arbor
1802	Tappan Presbyterian Association Library
1926	Dexter Public Library
1935	Milan Free Library
1937 and	
1945	Salem Library

Bibliography

Historical sketches of the Ladies' Library Associations of the State of Michigan, compiled and arranged by Mrs. A. F. Bixby and Mrs. A. Howell. Adrian, Michigan, Times and Expositor Steam Print, 1876.

Libraries in Michigan, by Genevieve Maria Julia Walton. Supplement to v. 17, Michigan Library Bulletin, Lansing, 1926.

Ladies' Library Association, 1868-1919. Summary of Fiftieth Anniversary, by the Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Helen J. Cleary, Ypsilanti.

Files of Michigan Historical Collections, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Files of library history, Public Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Ann Arbor, Michigan
April 27, 1948